Dear Friends,

Soils and Crops - March 20th

You’ve waited all year and it’s finally here!! The 86th Annual Jefferson County Soils and Crops Conference, the Jefferson County Social Event of the Year, will be Saturday, March 20th at 6:00 pm at Hillsboro High School in Hillsboro. Registration will begin at 5:00. Please find your registration form in this newsletter. Spectacular highlights from the 2010 Conference are:

- Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District Annual Meeting
- “Animal Rights and the threat to Missouri Animal Agriculture” by Karen Strange, Mo Federation of Pet Owners, (You won’t want to miss this presentation on the efforts by groups to control what you do with your farm animals. Karen is an outstanding speaker.)
- 2009 Jefferson County Farm Family
- Presentation of three Century Farm Awards
- Buffet meal

There will be displays by businesses and other agencies serving agriculture. And as in the past, if you have your blood pressure checked by the Jefferson County Health Department at the Conference, you could win a BRAND NEW CHAINSAW!

So rest up for the Social Event of the Year, the 86th Annual Soils and Crops Conference on March 20th!

DNR Offers Cost-Share Program for Energy Efficiency on the Farm

The Department of Natural Resources is offering an energy efficiency cost-share program for Missouri farmers. The cost share grants can pay up to 75% of the costs to upgrade equipment or production systems with a cap of $5,000 per applicant. The program, called Energize Missouri Agriculture, can cover a number of projects with the goal being to reduce energy use. Projects include solar powered pumps for watering livestock, solar fence chargers, insulating water tanks for livestock, GPS systems for tractors, sprayers, and combines, high volume – low speed fans for dairy or swine buildings, retro fitting burners and fans on grain bins, lighting upgrades, conservation tillage equipment such as straw spreaders, planters, or drills, or high efficiency electric motors.

Cost share is for equipment only and does not include labor. To sign up, you must pick up a form at the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District office here in Hillsboro, fill it out, and submit it by April 20th. A technical review panel will rank all the applications based on factors including energy savings and feasibility. A decision will then be made as to how many projects will be funded. For more information, visit www.dnr.mo.gov/transform/energizemissouri.htm.
Ever Hear of Giant Miscanthus??

Most of us are familiar with ethanol from corn or soy diesel from soybeans, but according to many sources, there may be even greater potential for energy production by the use of biomass. Plants like switchgrass or perhaps even fescue can be treated with enzymes to produce sugars that can be converted into cellulosic ethanol. While the process is still somewhat experimental, scientists are rapidly developing methods to economically convert biomass to energy.

Most of the work has been done with switchgrass, which is a perennial warm season grass. Switchgrass can reasonably yield up to 5 tons per acre per year with fertilization. But what if we could grow a biomass crop that would yield 3 times that amount with no fertilization? That crop just might be Giant Miscanthus. The University of Illinois has been involved in Giant Miscanthus research since 2002. It is a perennial warm season grass originating from Asia that has yielded up to 15 tons per acre per year in Illinois research without nitrogen fertilization! Evidently, Giant Miscanthus is a very efficient user of nitrogen and is not invasive. In fact, the plant is sterile, does not produce seed, and is propagated only by planting the rhizomes. Rhizomes are planted 4” deep and 3’ apart in mid April. Weeds must be controlled for the first year with herbicides. It takes 3 years to establish, but a site at Urbana was producing 14 tons of forage per acre by the third year. So far, U of I research has not found any advantage to nitrogen fertilization although researchers believe that more study needs to be done to determine if some fertilization might increase yields. By the way, I know what you cattlemen are thinking! My understanding is that Giant Miscanthus is not a palatable, nutritious forage for making hay or pasture.

Certainly we are several years away from biomass becoming a major player in the energy business, but it might be that Giant Miscanthus will play an important role in energy production the future.

Mission Statement????????????

Every farm, gardener or landowner should have a mission statement! Now, I know that you think. I have waded through the deep mud too much this winter and lost my mind, or I am still goofy from being knocked down by a cow last fall. However, really all planning begins with a mission statement.

What is a mission statement? It is, in simple terms, a statement about what you plan to do. It is based on your values and personal vision. Now stay with me; I’m not trying to get all touchy-feely! Your mission statement says what you do and gives insight to what is important to you. We find ourselves going in fifteen different directions and we lose track of what we really set out to accomplish. In our recent Grow Your Farm courses, I met Paul, who owns a very successful garden store in southeast Missouri. His mission statement is “We grow flowers and friends.” What can we learn from his mission statement? We know that Paul’s customers are very important to him. I learned that Paul’s business prides itself in customer service and having everything the grower needs at the highest quality.

We see mission statements all the time from big business. Lots of times it seems as if the statement was written more to impress someone than to describe the business. However, a mission statement should reflect your values and be written for your benefit. Let me give you a few examples of mission statements:

1) “Our goal is to provide the highest quality vegetables for our customers by growing unique, fresh vegetables that are healthy and raised in an environmentally responsible way.”
2) “We want to produce quality feeder cattle that perform in the feedlot and yield a high quality carcass resulting in an excellent product for beef consumers.”
3) “I want to grow a garden to provide safe, wholesome, and nutritious food for my family.”
4) “We plan to establish a vineyard to produce specially grapes for local wineries and to supplement our income in retirement.”

Once you write a mission statement, write goals based on that statement. So the next time you are riding on the tractor, cutting the grass, or working in the garden, think about your mission statement. A good mission statement can help you focus on what you really want to accomplish and more efficiently use time, money and other resources.
Supplement or Replacer - What’s the Difference?

Although calving season is still some time away, looking ahead to the spring calving season requires that producers be prepared for those situations where mother-nature needs a little boost. Beef cow calf producers occasionally will need to provide commercialcolostrum to baby calves that are born to two-year old heifers with very little milk, or to calves after a difficult birth. Some of these calves are very sluggish and slow to get up and find the teat. Therefore, they may not get the colostrum that they need to achieve successful passive transfer unless colostrum is provided by the cattle manager. Knowing which products to use in different situations can be very helpful. Colostrum supplements are less expensive to purchase than colostrum replacers, but they may not be the best choice for the situation at hand. The following excerpt from a Pennsylvania State University publication that is published on the E-Extension website helps to sort out the differences:

“Colostrum products that contain Immunoglobulin G (IgG) are regulated by the USDA Center for Veterinary Biologics. Supplement products are unable to raise the blood concentration of IgG above the species standard, which is 10 mg/ml. Any product that is able to raise serum IgG concentration above 10 mg/ml may be called a colostrum replacer.

Typically, colostrum supplements contain less than 100 g of IgG per dose and are composed of bovinecolostrum, other milk products, or bovine serum. Colostrum supplements can be used to increase the amount of IgG fed to calves when only low or medium quality colostrum is available. However, supplements cannot replace high quality colostrum. Even when a supplement is added to low quality colostrum, the IgG is often absorbed poorly, and antibody absorption is reduced compared to high quality maternal colostrum.

A limited number of products designed to replace colostrum are now on the market. These are bovine serum-based products and contain at least 100 g of IgG per liter plus fat, protein, vitamins, and minerals needed by the newborn calf. Colostrum replacer contains more immunoglobulin than supplement products and provides more antibodies than poor or moderate quality colostrum. In research trials, calves fed colostrum replacer have performed as well as calves fed maternal colostrum with no differences in IgG levels, efficiency of IgG absorption, incidence of scours, or growth rates.” (Source: Glenn Selk, OSU; E-Extension website “Colostrum Supplements and Replacer”, Authors: Sylvia Kehoe, Coleen Jones, Jud Heinrichs, The Pennsylvania State University, Department of Dairy and Animal Science).

86th Annual Soils & Crops Invitation

We appreciate your interest and support for the 86th Annual Jefferson County Soils & Crops Conference. Please select one of the following registration choices and return to the Extension office by March 18th, 2010.

Name _________________________________________________________________

Number Attending ________ ________ I am returning the registration form and paying $7.00 per person.

You may also call the Extension Center at (636) 797-5391 to reserve your place and pay $7.00/person at the door. Remember, registration begins at 5:00 PM. The program will start promptly at 6:00 PM. Once again, thank you for your support.

Dean Wilson
Agriculture & Rural Development Specialist
The cowboy was steadying his wife who was pale and weak. The neighbor asked, “Does your wife not feel well.” The cowboy answered, “She is recovering from plastic surgery.” The neighbor looked confused. The cowboy went on to say, “I just cut up her credit cards!?!#?!!"

Son Dallas is working in the pathology lab at the Vet School. They have done post mortem exams on a number of baby calves that have died this winter. He says that in almost every instance, dehydration was the cause of death. The take home lesson is that certainly treating scouring calves with antibiotics is necessary, but administering electrolytes and fluids may be just as important.

Speaking of farmers markets, I plan to meet with folks from Crystal City next week. They want to open an evening farmers market. There really seems to be a huge demand for locally grown products, but not nearly enough growers. Might be something for you to consider!

The De Soto Farmers Market will hold a meeting for prospective vendors on Tuesday evening, April 13th, at 6:30 pm at St. Andrews Church, 1004 Road Rd, in De Soto. The tentative agenda is certification of scales, explanation of sales tax, and regulation of products sold by the Health Department.

Vegetable planting calendars are available at the Extension Center. The calendar lists the best planting dates, depth to plant, inches between plants, and amount needed per person. It also lists some of the more popular varieties. In fact, while you’re at it, just ask for the complete Extension gardening packet. It is still free!

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, (NRCS), will administer a cost-share program under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, (EQIP) for high tunnel systems in Missouri. Seasonal high tunnels are structures, usually made from plastic sheeting on a frame that will extend the growing season. It is very well adapted for vegetable and specialty crop production. High tunnels differ from greenhouses in that no mechanical ventilation or heating are used. We hope to learn more about this program soon so give me a call if you are interested or call the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District at 636-789-2441, ext. 3.

Thanks to Mary and Stan Bonacker and Windy Hill Farm Supply for sponsoring the Cattlemen’s Annual Meeting. We all had a great time and the food was excellent! The Cattlemen’s Auction raised over $1,800 to support the organization and the cattle show at the fair.

We do plan to AI heifers again this spring. I think this is our third year to bred heifers. If you would like to participate in the program, let us know. The purpose is to all work together to learn more about estrus synchronization and artificial insemination in cattle. You don’t have to have lots of heifers. In fact, we have bred one heifer for owners several times. Heifers must be at least 14 months old by mid May and be current on vaccinations. Let me know if you are interested.

When you have a publication as high-brow as the Jefferson County Ag News, there are certain standards of what is appropriate that must be always upheld. However, occasionally, it is okay to go to the edge and maybe peek over, (especially if the joke is really funny!) A cowboy and his wife were riding their horses out in the pasture. Suddenly, they realized that they had ridden over a rattlesnake. The cowboy remarked to his wife, “Did you see that rattlesnake that we just rode over. He didn’t even move or coil up or strike or anything. He must be suffering from reptile dysfunction!?!#?!!

Dean Wilson
Agriculture & Rural Development Specialist